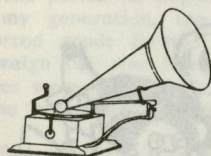


Hillandale

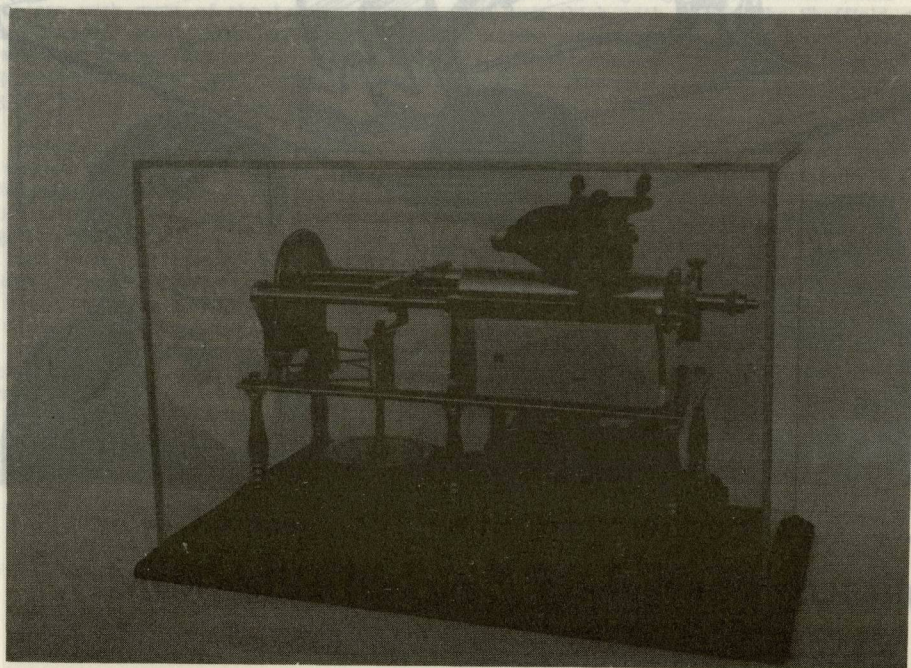


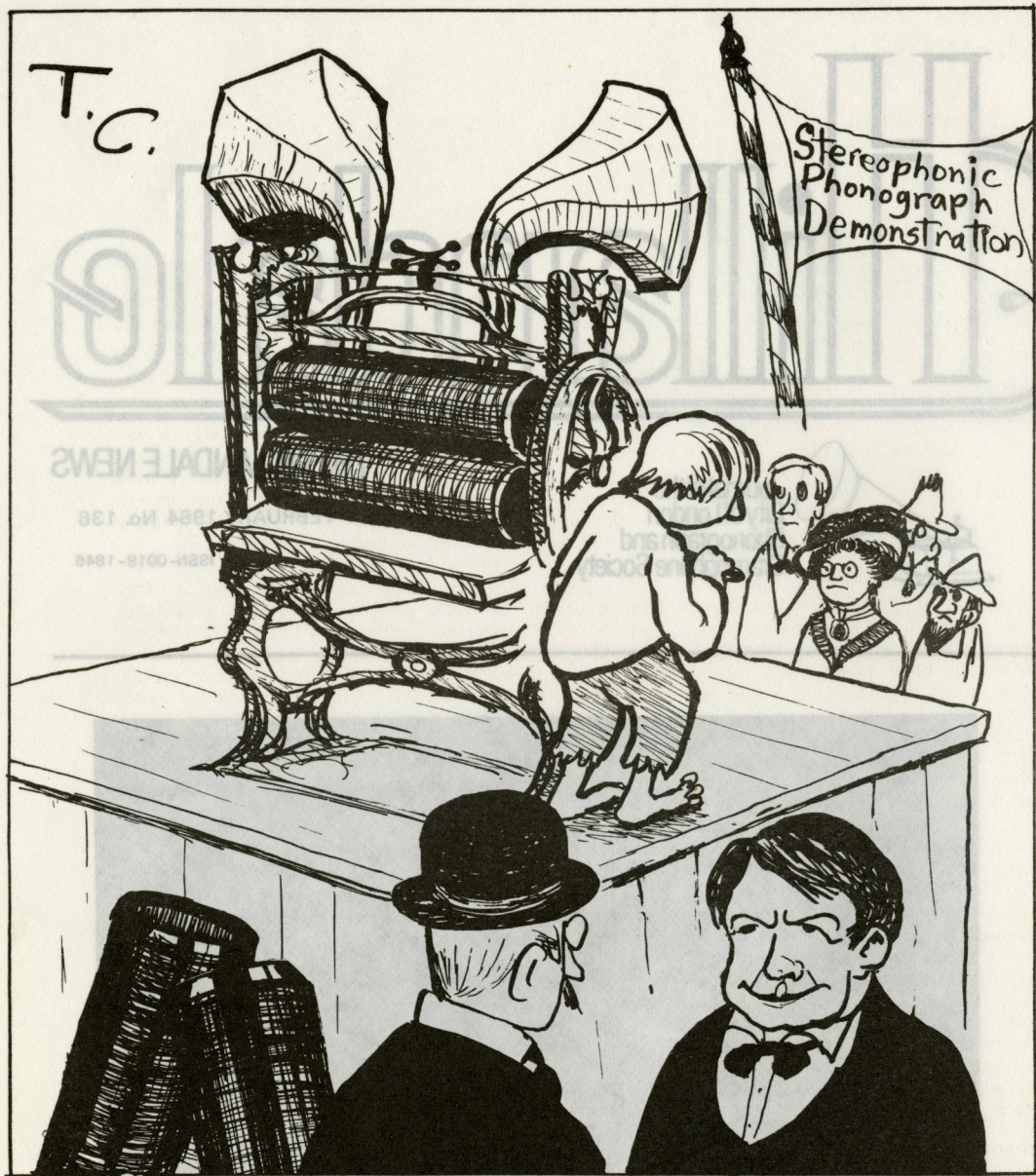
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Gramophone Society

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

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"... and besides doubling the demand for cylinders it will help Mina with the laundry."

Edchat

I was talking the other day to a specialist in early radio, a subject not a million miles removed from our own, and he was commenting on the difficulty of getting English speaking collectors interested in the many radio sets made on the European continent. Such insularity is not unfamiliar, and indeed I myself find it very hard to get excited by Pathe phonographs or Lindstroem gramophones, for example. The fact that Edison phonographs and even G & T gramophones are no more British than Pathe or Lindstroem machines might indicate that these should equally be cold-shouldered (leaving a few not very good Edison Bell and even fewer other makes from pre-1910), but this does not seem to follow in practice. Could it be that it is not where they were made, but where they were marketed that counts? After all, collecting is all about nostalgia, and nostalgia means, literally, a longing for home. It has come to imply a longing for times past, but there is still an element of familiarity; the longing is for times past in one's own country and way of life.

The period so longed for is often that just beyond recall, just before one was born and for my generation, the key nostalgia period is that between the wars - a time when imported goods formed a very small proportion of those on the market, when to own a foreign car was likely to raise an eyebrow or two, and even assembled cheap gramophones were increasingly 100% British in origin. (Remember the Concert Grande - "British to the last screw"? Such a slogan now would seem not only absurd but also obscene!)

Before 1914, it was another matter; there were not many cars about, but a large proportion of those that were came from over the Channel. Anyone interested in vintage cars, by the way, is recommended to look out for a copy of Columbia MC9, Leslie Henson singing 'Motoring' from 'Kissing Time'. This is a single-sided record with the so-called 'star light blue' label, used for recordings of stage-show excerpts by original cast artists. Columbia specialised in these at the time (circa 1921), having signed a contract some years before with most of the London theatres. MC9 is thick with names like Sheffield-Simplex, Deasey, Mors, Daimler, Rover, B.S.A., Sizaire and even Ford (to which 'the wife' was relegated). However, as a mere dilettante record-collector, I will refrain from delving into the subject any more, lest the wrath of the Andrews descends upon me for getting my matrix numbers in a twist.

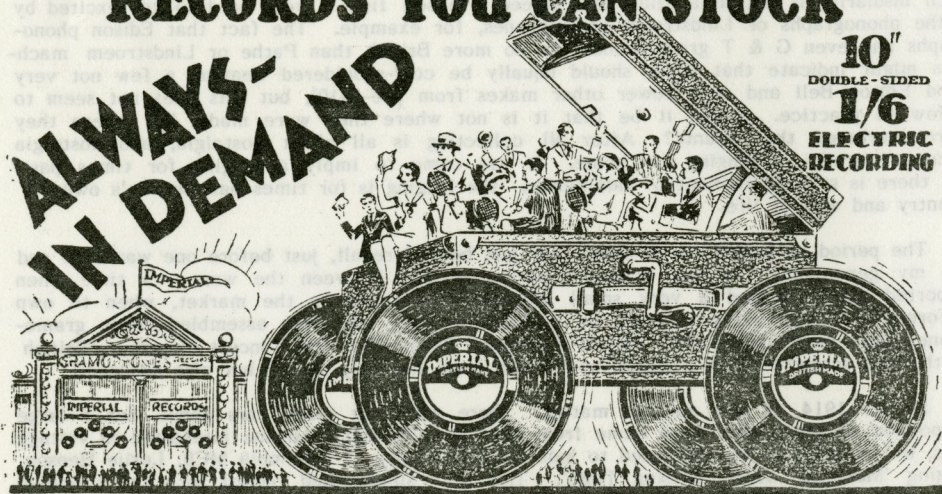
A paragraph in a newspaper recently referred to EMI's intention to co-sponsor this year's Cruft's dog show, thwarted by the organisers who would not allow them to display a real-life Nipper look-alike in front of a Gramophone because it was not an entrant in the competition. One wonders how idiotically dogmatic (sorry) a Committee can get, although it did occur to me to wonder how EMI intended to keep a dog sitting and staring into a horn even long enough to be photographed. Apart from this, I gather the company's only other celebration of Nipper's centenary was the re-issue of the 'Story of Nipper', in which Frank Andrews had a hand. I hope this will serve as an answer to the lady who wrote to me some time back on the subject; my reply to her has just been returned to me by the Post Office because they do not recognise the address. As I have thrown away the original, I cannot check it, but what I typed looks perfectly reasonable to me, and whatever is wrong with it could I am sure be correctly interpreted by the local post office if only they wouldn't be so dogmatic themselves over Post Codes.

Front Cover Illustration: Ch. Burgisser of the Department of Physics at Geneva University has built this electric phonograph according to the instructions in Gillett's "The Phonograph and How to Construct it" (A reprint of the book is available from the Society Booklist).

IMPERIALS — the QUICKEST-MOVING RECORDS YOU CAN STOCK

**ALWAYS-
IN DEMAND**

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1/6
ELECTRIC
RECORDING



YOU'LL never find Imperial Records "hang fire"—their popularity keeps them moving—from your shelves into your customers' eager hands. They earn their popularity by their excellent recording, reasonable price and ever-fresh selection of successful numbers. Keep well stocked and watch how your trade grows.

VOCALS & ORCHESTRALS

- HAROLD LAMBERT**
1884 TOGETHER. De Sylva-Brown-Henderson
 Away down South in Heaven. Green-Warren
MALE DUET—THE RADIO IMPS
1883 DREAM KISSES. Vallen-Jerome
 Our Bungalow of Dreams.
 Malie-Newman-Verges
1882 (a) MALE DUET. (b) IRVING KAUFMANN.
 (a) LET A SMILE BY YOUR UMBRELLA
 Kahal-Wheeler-Fain
 (b) Henry's made a lady out of Lizzy.
 De Sylva-Brown-Henderson
ROY SMECK. (a) Octo Chorda Solo—with Vocal
 Chorus. (b) Guitar and Piano Duet
1881 (a) MY OHIO HOME. Kahn-Donaldson
 (b) Itching Fingers. Roy Smeeck
CELLO SOLO PLAYED BY GERSHAM
PARKINGTON, with Harp and Organ Accom.
1880 AVE MARIA. Gounod
 Le Cygne. Saint-Saens
GANDINO & HIS SALON ORCHESTRA
 Selections from "THE DESERT SONG"
1879 Part 1. Sigmund
 Selections from "THE DESERT SONG"
 Part 2. Remberg
 Selections from "HIT THE DECK"
1878 Part 1. Vincent
 Selections from "HIT THE DECK"
 Part 2. Youmans

VOCALS and ORCHESTRALS—continued

- GEORGE CATHIE & HIS ORCHESTRA**
 (Musical Director of the North Pier, Blackpool)
1874 SLAVONIC RHAPSODY. Carl Friedmann
 Prelude in G minor. C. Rachmaninoff
IL TROVATORE SELECTION. Part 1
1873 II Trovatore Selection. Part 2. G. Verdi
 Including the Miserere scene. G. Verdi

DANCES

- ADRIAN SCHUBERT & HIS DANCE ORCH.**
1877 TOGETHER. Waltz.
 De Sylva-Brown-Henderson
 Where in the World—is there someone for
 me? Waltz. Lewis-Marks-Gill
NATHAN GLANTZ & HIS ORCHESTRA
ONE MORE NIGHT. Fox-Trot
1876 Under the Moon. Fox-Trot
 Rose-Burke
 Lyn-Wheeler-Snyder
THE ROUNDERS
WHAT'LL YOU DO? Fox-Trot
1875 My Ohio Home. Fox-Trot
 Miller-Cohn
 Kahn-Donaldson

IMPERIAL RECORDS

CRYSTALATE GRAMOPHONE RECORD Mfg. Co. Ltd. London Depot: 69, FARRINGDON RD., E.C. 1
 and at TONBRIDGE, KENT. Depots at Manchester, Liverpool Leeds, Glasgow and Dublin

May, 1928

CRYSTALATE

THE HISTORY OF THE CRYSTALATE COMPANIES IN THE RECORD INDUSTRY

1901 - 1937

Part 3: Rex and retirement

Crystalate launched three new series of records in 1928. These were a Scottish "SC" prefixed Imperial, an "H" prefixed Jewish Imperial and the 7-inch "The Victory Record" for Woolworth's, who sold "nothing over sixpence". The two extant Victory registered trade marks were bought from Columbia for £75; Columbia had owned them since 1916 and had bought them from the company which first sold Victory records in 1912. (A third Victory trade mark was submitted for registration in October 1928, the design used on the discs later.) Record collectors will be familiar with the Victory label "The long playing record", which had some differences in detail of design and colour during its few years of production. The series began at No. 1 - for a change! There was also a "nursery series" using letters of the alphabet instead of catalogue numbers.

Reports in November 1928 referring to the Victory contract with Woolworth's also mentioned that Marks & Spencer were taking on Imperials. With this strong backing for their products, a Crystalate board meeting discussed an increase in the company's capital to complete arrangements to join with the Regal Record Company of New York (The Plaza Music Company's subsidiary). Crystalate's shareholders sanctioned an increase of £50,000 for the purchase of all Regal's shares. Besides the 10-inch Regal and Banner matrices, the company also acquired those for the 7-inch Little Tots and Playtime records. In England, the Mimosas and Olivers had been increased to 7 inches.

The April 1929 Annual General Meeting was told of profits of £101,592. The business was then entering its most successful period. A Berlin factory was equipped for record manufacture and was expected to be in production in a couple of weeks.

The 1929 catalogue listed a Swedish repertoire in a 1,000 series, confusingly duplicating some numbers still listed for early acoustic Imperials. A short Taal language South African repertoire was also listed with "T" prefixes.

A May report said one of the factories was being enlarged and that the former West Hampstead Town Hall had been acquired to become a modern recording studio with administration offices. All Crystalate's buildings and plant were then valued at £92,201. The *Deutsche Crystalate G.m.b.H.* had been formed in Germany and *La Compagnie Crystalate Francaise* in France.

In June Imperial House in Faringdon Street was vacated and the company took temporary premises at Endolithics at 60 Aldersgate Street before moving to 60/62 City Road, then being prepared as Crystalate House.

An August report said that Crystalate's Regal Record Company had merged with the Scranton Button Company of Scranton, Pennsylvania and with the Cameo Record Corporation of New York, a branch of the Pathe Phonograph and Radio Corporation. These firms coalesced into a new company: the American Record Corporation, with a 9 million dollar capital. Crystalate had a third interest with three directors on the board. Scranton had another three directors and Cameo had two. Under its President the companies would operate separately, the Scranton company undertaking the pressing while Regal and Cameo would arrange recordings and organise sales. There were factories

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U.S.A., Germany

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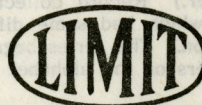
10/6

Bayonet/H.M.V.
Continental or
Columbia
Fittings

SOUND REASONS FOR SELLING THE "LIMIT" SOUND BOX

Everywhere the wonderful tone of the "LIMIT" Soundbox commands success. Its Metal Diaphragm is designed to give life-like purity on the high and low Registers. You have only to demonstrate to

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LIMIT ENGINEERING CO., Ltd.

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what we
wanted**
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Superb **TWELVE INCH
RECORDS**

**2/-
EACH**

Produced in order to meet the demand of the great music-loving public for a full size twelve-inch record of popular classical and other favourite works. Bringing music of the highest class within the reach of all.



Crystalate
RELEASES

HOW TO ORDER.

Write for attractive trade terms.
Place your first order direct to—
**Crystalate Gramophone
Record Mfg. Co. Ltd.,
60/62, City Road, E.C.1.**
First order for 12 records
delivered carriage paid. List
of wholesale distributors will
be included with the records.

PALACE OPERA COMPANY

(Vocal Selections. Two Parts)

THE MIKADO Z105

THE BOHEMIAN GIRL Z104

FRANZ HOFFMANN'S

VIENNESE ORCHESTRA

STRAUSS WALTZES Z106

(Selections.)

WALTZES FROM VIENNA Z102

(Vocal Selections.)

Members of

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

(Selections. Two Parts)

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA Z107

MADAME BUTTERFLY Z100

PAGLIACCI Z101

ROY BURDETT AND HIS ORCHESTRA

A PAUL JONES (The Popular Dance)

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY (Children's

Party Dance) Z108

MUSICAL CHAIRS (in Two Parts) Z109

at Scranton, Auburn in New York State, at Framingham in Massachusetts and at Glendale in California. More Imperial depots were opened in Belfast, Newcastle and Nottingham, and Crystalate House was occupied in September. By this time the Imperial label had undergone a change in colour to red and claret. "Electrical Recording" had been added to the lilac and mauve labels.

The previous three years had seen many changes in the rivals to the Imperial and smaller records. At least ten labels, from Aco to Vocalion, had disappeared, but another twelve, probably one or two more, from Edison Bell's "The Crown" to "Unison", had replaced those, although the three Pathe labels and the Edison record would be gone by the end of the year. More depots opened in November in Birmingham, Bristol and Hull.

Arthur Charles Haddy, aged 23 and married to Harry Fay's daughter, visited the Hampstead studios in 1929 and felt he could design better recording equipment than that in use. He eventually left Western Electric to join Crystalate as chief of the recording laboratory. William Ditcham, chief recorder, resigned in the summer of 1930 after eight years with the Company. His place was taken by a Mr. B.S.Tuke. In 1930, profits of the British Company had increased by 15% and the German company was reported as having done well.

The Imperial label underwent another colour change to dark blue and red during this period. Imperials were reduced to 1s.3d. in February 1931. Woolworth's took the last deliveries of Victory records and began taking the new 8-inch Eclipse records in March. This was the first new record to benefit from Haddy's recording technique and had excellent sound quality for 6d. Crown Record matrices from the U.S.A. were in use for Imperials during 1931 when more depots opened in Great Yarmouth, Weston-super-Mare and York.

Late in the year the American Record Corporation absorbed the Brunswick and Brunswick-controlled Vocalion records in America, and the matrices later became available to Crystalate as a consequence of its holding in A.R.C. The Crown matrices stopped coming after December 1931.

In November 1931, after thirty years in the business, the company began to sell records labelled Crystalate. These were 12-inch discs priced at only two shillings. They had a Z. 100 catalogue series. Matrices from the European associate companies formed part of the repertoire.

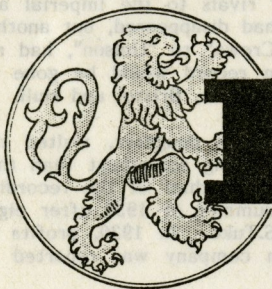
In March 1932 came intimations that Crystalate were negotiating for the Vocalion Gramophone Co. Ltd. of Hayes, with recording studios at Holland Park. Vocalion were then making only the 9-inch Broadcasts and Unisons, and the 10-inch Broadcast Super Twelves by a new electrical process. A capital increase of £125,000 was approved to purchase the Vocalion business.

After only four months, the 12-inch Crystalate label was discontinued; the Z. 100 series continued under a newly designed red, blue and gold Imperial label which was also given to the 10-inch discs in March 1932.

The April Annual General Meeting heard of increased profits for 1931. Business in Europe and the affairs of the French and German companies had been good, but the American Record Corporation had done poorly.

After selling out to Crystalate, the Vocalion Co. Ltd. went into voluntary liquidation in April 1932, but Crystalate formed another Vocalion company of the same name with

THE BIGGEST SELLING PROPOSITION
EVER OFFERED TO THE TRADE!



REX

THE KING OF RECORDS

A FULL SIZE 10"

RECORD FOR



A new Record by the makers of the famous
Broadcast and Imperial Records—and the
most sensational value ever offered to the
Public.

On "Rex." they can enjoy all the latest Song
and Dance Hits, or Novelty Records by first-
class British and American Artists and Bands
perfectly recorded, at the amazingly low price
of One Shilling.

BY THE MAKERS OF
BROADCAST
'TWELVE'
AND
IMPERIAL

BROADCAST

'TWELVE'



IMPERIAL



CRYSTALATE 60 CITY ROAD LONDON E.C.1

a £64,000 capital, to continue the business from its City Road address. This Vocalion company reduced the price of Broadcast and Unison records to 1s. from 1s.3d. and also reduced the wholesale price of the Broadcast Super Twelves.

The Carl Rosa Opera Company and Jack Payne and his Band had become the latest exclusive artists to Imperial. Jack Payne was given his own label. His first records had been due out in March (a 3½-inch promotion disc had already been circulated), but they were delayed until April owing to a fire which damaged some matrices.

It became Crystalate's policy to issue pressings from the A.R.C. on Broadcast 10-inch records.

In October 1932 British Homophone, Crystalate, Decca and E.M.I. began operations to ban the public performances of records unless licensed. These culminated eighteen months later with licences issued for a fee paid to the new Phonographic Performances Ltd., but during the interim Crystalate had allowed public performances where they approved requests for them.

In mid-December the two Broadcast labels were augmented by a Broadcast International label, pressed from Crystalate's overseas matrices and sold through Vocalion at 1s.6d. In February 1933 came the Broadcast Four-Tune, also at 1s.6d. This had a finer groove pitch and carried two full recordings on each side. Uniquely this latter disc was issued one every Thursday. At this time labels began to carry the legends prohibiting public performances.

The 1933 Annual General Meeting heard of reduced profits. The American and French companies had had a satisfactory year but the German company had not done well. It was decided to make all Broadcast records at Tonbridge, the turnover being insufficient to support the Hayes factory. Arrangements had been completed for the transfer and both sales departments had been merged. From June onwards there were to be fewer issues of Broadcast each month.

On July 10th land registration charges were made on all Crystalate's properties to secure monies due, or to become due, to the Westminster Bank Ltd.

Monthly supplements, combining all labels except for Eclipse, started in August 1933.

The competition had changed during the past four years, and new rivals had come and gone. Thirteen new labels, from Celebrity to Worldecho, were among those. Of the longer established labels, seven had left the scene, from Edison Bell Electron to Zonophone. Nonetheless, when the Rex 10-inch record was introduced by Crystalate at the highly competitive price of 1s.0d. in September 1933, there were still some twenty-one different labels (from Beltona to Trusound) to challenge the new entry, Rex "The King of Records" - "Hear What you Like, When you Like". The Rex trade mark had been applied for by the first Vocalion Gramophone Co. Ltd., and passed to Crystalate's Vocalion company with the takeover of April 1932.

British Homophone responded to the Rex by bringing out a new 1/- Homochord in October 1933. Crystalate now began an advertising campaign for the Rex and its other labels by using six of the national newspapers every Friday and Saturday but the Imperials and Broadcast continued for five months more, ending in February 1934. The 10-inch Broadcast Imperial label (with a 4,000 series) replaced them at 1s.6d., but only for eleven months.

NEW! Vocalion SWING Records

The greatest swing record sensation in the history of the gramophone industry! On VOCALION Swing Records you will hear the acknowledged kings of jazz in a series of magnificent recordings that have hitherto been denied to you.

This series will form a complete library of all that is worthwhile in modern dance music. Records like these will give you pleasure for many years. Approximately every three weeks, commencing to-day, new releases will be made available—and don't forget to ask for the special VOCALION Swing Record leaflets which will be issued on the same dates, telling you all about the records and the men who played in them.

Although it was originally scheduled for mid-May release, we have responded to the enormous public demand by rushing through an advance release of the first English BENNY CARTER record. Thus, in addition to the three records discussed in the leaflet, the following is NOW ON SALE:

BENNY CARTER AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Record No. 4 **Swingin' at Maida Vale** (Carter) *Featuring Benny Carter—clarinet tenor sax and arranger. Featuring Benny Carter—alto sax, clarinet and arranger.*

Personnel: MAX GOLDBERG, DUNCAN WHYTE, TOMMY McQUATER (Trumpets), TED HEATH, BILL MULRANEY (Trombones), BENNY CARTER, E. O. POGSON, BUDDY FEATHERSTONHAUGH, ANDY McDEVITT (Reeds), PAT DODD (Piano), GEO ELLIOTT (Guitar), RONNIE GUBERTINI (Drums), AL BURKE (Bass).

TAFT JORDAN

*TAFT JORDAN AND THE MOB

(Featuring TEDDY WILSON)
Record No. 1

Night Wind
If The Moon Turns Green

*Star Selection of No. 1 Rhythm Club!

BENNY CARTER

LUIS RUSSELL AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Record No. 2 **Ghost of the Freaks**
Hokus Pokus

BENNY GOODMAN'S MODERNISTS

Record **Solitude**
No. 3 **HARLEM HOT SHOTS**
(Featuring WINGY MANNONE)
March Winds and April Showers

For personels and information concerning these three records, see the special leaflet which has been issued in conjunction with their release. Supplies of these leaflets are available to all Rhythm Clubs, on demand, from Vocalion Swing Records, 60, City Road, London, E.C. 1.

TEDDY WILSON

BENNY GOODMAN

LUIS RUSSELL

WINGY MANNONE

SEND FOR INTERESTING
LEAFLET ABOUT THESE
NEW SWING RECORDS

Obtainable from Marks & Spencer, Keith Prowse, Selfridges, and all principal Gramophone Dealers.

Vocalion Swing Records

2/6

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SWING MUSIC

During 1934 a new contract customer was the Elim Publishing Company Ltd., a mouth-piece for the Elim Four-Square Gospel Alliance. Their 10-inch Elim record had a red and gold label and was similar in appearance to the Broadcast Super Twelve.

The April 1935 Annual General Meeting heard there was to be no dividend, as money was being spent on a new synthetic resin department. Only Rex and Eclipse records were in production. The last issues of Eclipse were taken by Woolworth's in July. 9-inch Crown records at 6d., new from Crystalate, became exclusive to Woolworth's from September. Rex and Crown continued for the next eight months. Crystalate then used another old trade mark by bringing out the Vocalion "Swing Series" label, through their own Vocalion company. (This was later put into voluntary liquidation on June 6th 1938).

Two of Crystalate's directors went to America and while there signed an agreement giving their company pressing rights in the whole of the Brunswick and Vocalion matrix stock, then a part of the American Record Corporation. Pressing could begin from September 1st 1936.

Crystalate were now to enjoy only another few months in the record trade, but could still introduce two more labels. Both were put on sale in November 1936. These were the Vocalion Continental Series, starting at C 0001, and the Vocalion Celebrity Series, numbered in the 500 range.

In March 1937 the records side of Crystalate was sold to Decca for £150,000 in cash and the allotment of 400,000 of Decca Record shares at 2/6d. R. Warnford-Davis became a Decca Record Director. The continental and American interests and the factories in Kent were not included in this purchase.

Decca immediately ended the Woolworth contract for Crown records and the manufacture of Rex and Vocalion was transferred to Decca's New Malden works. The Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow depots were retained to act as wholesalers for records made by Decca. In May 1937, Crystalate handed these over to the Arc Trading Company Ltd., a new organisation which, by agreement, was to act as factors for Decca and Rex records, among other products.

On the 31st January 1938 the Crystalate Gramophone Record Manufacturing Co. Ltd. changed its name to Crystalate Ltd., still capitalised at £375,000 and based at Golden Green, Tonbridge.

POSTSCRIPT

Crystalate Ltd. held its 400,000 Decca Record shares until October 1938 when, during the period to August 1939, it used them as part payment for the 95,100 shares they acquired from the Donnington Finance Company Ltd. in the British Homophone Co. Ltd. Other assets disposed of for those shares were the freehold of a factory at Golden Green, 16,442 shares in Consolidated Film Industries Incorporated, 1,000 £1 shares in the Composition Billiard Ball Supply Co. Ltd. and holdings in General Industrial Supplies Ltd. Sir Herbert Edward Morgan and Jack Lesser, directors of Ebenestos, joined Crystalate's board, Crystalate controlling both British Homophone and Homophone's subsidiary, Ebenestos Industries Ltd.

In May 1937 British Homophone had also withdrawn from the manufacture of entertainment records. They sold their business in that line to E.M.I. and Decca for the sum of £22,500, agreeing not to make records for the next twenty years whether for itself, its subsidiary Ebenestos Ltd. or any other associates or subsidiaries, excepting records made for the purposes of advertising by being broadcast, or in any other manner, such records to contain material rendering them unfit for ordinary entertainment purposes which

were not to be sold to the general public. British Homophone also rendered up their registered trade marks in Homophone, Homochord, Sterno, Plaza and others; rendered up all masters, mother and stamper matrices and all rights in them, and all copyrights excepting 300 masters from which they agreed to supply free copies to Decca and E.M.I. if requested. They also rendered up all the information cards, all record presses except those needed for pressing advertising records, all stocks of finished records (except Kid-Kords) and all registered designs.

I wish to acknowledge the following as providers of information not generally available to ordinary research and to whom I give my heartfelt thanks:

Arthur Badrock

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Ruth Edge

Len Pets

Ray Wile

Researcher

Researcher, U.S.A.

Archivist at EMI Music Ltd.

Former Archivist at EMI Music Ltd.

Researcher, U.S.A.

Frank Andrews

REVIEW

MUSIEK UIT WAS, published by Fonografisch Museum, [REDACTED] Amsterdam, Netherlands. 32pp., plus translation insert. Price not advised.

We have received an excellent little booklet from Harry Belle of the Fonografisch Museum, Amsterdam. This is the story of sound recording and reproduction, using superb colour photographs of some of the instruments in the museum, as well as period black and white photographs and drawings, all set in a novel arrangement of contiguous hexagons in honeycomb form. Some of these illustrations are familiar, over familiar, but some have not been seen before, and would certainly appeal to the museum visitor anxious to learn more about the exhibits and their history.

With the booklet comes an eight-page translation by Leó Boudewijns, and presumably there are versions available to suit other nationalities. This would probably appeal more to the starting collector than one of long establishment, but without a doubt a high quality production that Harry Belle and his collaborators can well be pleased with.

No price has been indicated, and those desirous of buying a copy should direct their enquiries to the Museum.

G.L.F.

10-INCH BERLINER

I was very interested in the comments from John Milmo and Alan Kelly (December Hillandale) on the 10-inch Berliner GC 7942. I can confirm two of their points: the artist's name is G. (not J.) Jacobs, and incised into the surface is the number 127-D.

However the 7 has been altered by a straight line (i.e. ∇) to read as a 9. This line is so definite that it does not appear to have been made mistakenly, for example as a German 7.

James Dowdeswell

CINEMA RECORDS (and more on that 10-INCH BERLINER)

Dear Mr. Proudfoot,

May I try and comment on one or two queries that have appeared in HILLANDALE recently. In a letter, George Taylor was asking about early sound-on-disc films and perhaps I can recommend him to the book "The Birth of the Talkies" (from Edison to Jolson) by Harry H. Gedould, published in 1875 by Indiana University Press. This is one of the very best of the books on the subject, and while it does not list all the Vitaphone shorts, it goes into some detail about the performers in these and the feature films, and includes some of the classical musicians. A book like this should be obtainable through the public library system. Catalogues of these early short films have been published, but I cannot recall at this moment where I have seen them listed.

While on the subject of the 'Talkies', recent correspondence has touched on the Columbia Cinema Service Records. The largest number in the Columbia catalogue seems to be in 1935, when fifty-one were shown, and that seems to be their last available year. All these were 12-inch 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.p.m. records, and had enough playing time for each side to accommodate both sides of the standard 12-inch record. Over the years I have had quite a number in all sorts of conditions, but as Frank James has found out, almost all are distorted and give little enjoyment at home. The one exception seems to be YBX 15 "Light Cavalry" by Percy Pitt and the Court Symphony Orchestra (from DX42). Some years ago I inflicted this on the members at a London meeting and there were no complaints. I recall this side being played regularly before the matinee at a seaside cinema I used to be taken to as a youngster from 1932 onwards, but I cannot recall any others of the series being used. The introduction of the Rex records in 1934 probably put the lid on the Columbia discs for interval music at smaller cinemas, as Dixon Hits and Charlie Kunz Piano Medleys were plentiful for a shilling, right up and into the War period, while the Columbians had to be ordered and cost 7s.6d. Without any technical pretensions, it would seem that congestion in a coarse slow-moving groove was the cause of the distortion, and it is incredible that Columbia with their reputation for silent surfaces and realistic and full concert hall recordings should have allowed these records to go out. No doubt cinema sound systems were not selective enough to expose the distortions.

In the matter of a 10-inch Berliner record, I have had one of these for many years - GC 1211, John W. Morton on Mutton Pies - and in its day it was examined by Leonard Petts. In a note he confessed himself baffled "as it has so many conflicting characteristics that it is impossible to date it". He felt cautious about being more specific on the date than somewhere in 1901. Although 10-inch records came in April 1901 he expressed a feeling that this record was issued later in the year.

The violinist Jacobs on James Dowdeswell's 10-inch Berliner was the man who later became leader of the Trocadero Orchestra when the restaurant was opened in Shaftesbury Avenue in 1905 on the site of Sam Adams' music hall. The orchestra played in the grill-room and he is reputed to have charmed the patrons with his violin playing. This was said to be more attractive than his appearance, although women flocked in hundreds to hear him play. He and his orchestra made many G & T records in the Edwardian decade, and he was succeeded by Jean Lensen.

Yours sincerely,

George Frow.

Dear Christopher,

Mr. Dowdeswell's 10-inch Berliner is of course of some interest to me - not least because I haven't yet managed to get hold of one for myself: it is definitely a hole in my Berliner collection!

The suggestion that it is a "transitional disc" is quite sensible; it is of course the earliest form of the 10-inch disc as produced by the Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd around August 1901. Soon afterwards came the first paper label records of the "flush" G&T form, although the embossed Berliner style persisted in the 7-inch size for some time into 1902, with just the format seen on this 10-inch disc.

The 7-inch records of earlier in 1901 show the company trying to get more and more playing time on to the discs - at least 2½ minutes in some cases, with consequent cramping of the label space. It is interesting to note that some of the earliest 10-inch G&Ts are recorded at very slow speeds (65rpm or even less), to take advantage of the higher linear speed of a larger diameter groove.

It is of course quite erroneous to take the catalogue number series (in this case 7900) as an indication of the dates of the records - or even the order of dates of the records: for instance, some low numbers in the 2000 series were changed by adding a language prefix and were then re-used years later (Brian Rust's listing does not make this clear). When 10-inch records were introduced, the catalogue numbers used were generally mixed up along with the 7-inch records, although there were some blocks of numbers allocated to the two different sizes. It would be interesting to know the matrix number of this record - although at least the left hand part of the number is likely to be obliterated by being smoothed out near the centre hole.

I can appreciate that the disc plays well: following the introduction of direct cutting into wax (instead of etching into zinc) in May 1900, there was quite commonly a great freedom of sound as recorded; however, over the next few years, the recording engineers became rather more reticent - probably to try and avoid blasting and wear on the (now quite expensive) larger records. Some piano accompaniments on the 1901 and 1902 records are as well recorded as anything on pre-electric records. I have one or two quite outstanding Russian Berliners of this period.

Other artists I have heard of on 10-inch Berliner discs are (definitely in ascending order of artistry!): George G. Gaskin, Corradetti and Davidov. I don't mind settling for a Gaskin....

Yours sincerely

Peter Adamson.

THE KARNOPHONE

"...A more genuinely funny and amazing performance we have never seen...."

On December 5th 1896 'The Era' noted that one of the great attractions at the Middlesex Music Hall was "Edison's Phonograph exhibited by Mr. Fred Karno". Within a year it had become an established music hall attraction, the bill matter for an appearance at the 'Star' music hall in Bermondsey in 1897 reading:-

FRED KARNO'S COMPANY OF SPEECHLESS COMEDIANS
WITH
THE MOST MARVELLOUS INVENTION OF THE AGE
---THE KARNOPHONE

The story had really begun some years earlier when Fred Karno, then a knockabout acrobat playing the music halls, met an American sea captain while appearing in Bristol. The sea captain had just arrived in port from America and had some Edison Phonographs for sale. Realising the amount of public interest in this latest 'wonder', Fred paid him £15 for one and took it along to the local theatre to demonstrate it to the manager. It was a sensational success - Fred had rigged up an ingenious system consisting of two old bicycle pumps which he had fixed to a bracket on the side of the table on which his 'Karnophone' stood. When he played a cylinder he pumped them up and down, suggesting that he was actually creating the music. Some time later Fred was spotted by an agent who arranged a West End appearance at the Tivoli, and here Fred persuaded members of the audience to record their voices and listen in amazement to them being played back. Some of the greatest music hall acts of the day made 'one-off' brown wax cylinder records on his novelty Karnophone.

By 1897 Fred was advertising in 'The Era' that he was fully booked until 1899, and that his Karnophone artists never rested "Because they never get tired".. By the turn of the century, when the Phonograph was becoming commonplace, Fred Karno dropped it from his act and concentrated on his sketches, which brought him world fame. By the early 1900's, he had five companies on the road operating from his so-called 'Fun Factory' in London. Many famous comedians worked for Fred Karno, but he is perhaps best remembered today for giving Charlie Chaplin a chance. Fred Karno became a household name, his crazy sketch company becoming synonymous with the farcical and the absurd.

The Edison Phonograph transaction with the American sea company way back in the 1890's helped pave his way to success and fortune... "The most marvellous invention of the age, the KARNOPHONE, a more genuinely funny and amazing performance we have never seen"...

David Trigg

No connexion, presumably, with the later Karna gramophones - Ed.

A LOOK AT THE LUMIERE

John Stannard comments on the Model 460 in mahogany

The Gramophone Company made some wonderful and fascinating machines in its time; but none equalled the completely revolutionary style of the His Master's Voice Lumiere Pleated Diaphragm gramophone. It sits on the table gleaming of gold and shining mahogany. It holds the world of music within its grasp - yet its official name is 'Model 460'. A prosaic title if ever there was one for so stylish a machine.

In the short period of its production, from 1924 - 5, it must have caused quite a stir in the gramophone shops. Completely different in design from anything that had gone before, with no soundbox, tone-arm or horn, the 460 glinted its extravagance to the prospective buyer.

I have heard collectors say the 460 is not a good player, but if the diaphragm is properly adjusted it can sound very pleasant. It is not a sharp sound like that of a small mica diaphragm soundbox, but mellowed and with a fair helping of the lower music register.

The diaphragm itself measures 14 inches in diameter and is made of paper treated with acetate. The diaphragm is made up of three open fan-like pleated sections joined together making up the circle. This pleated paper circle is then clamped in an aluminium band which grips it round the circumference. A small hard-core centre is glued in place with a further small hole through it to take the stylus bar. The finished thing was sprayed gold, including the aluminium band.

Getting the vibrations from the record to travel up some nine inches from the needle point to the diaphragm centre is ingenious and must have caused its designer a few headaches at the start. The sound vibrations leave the needle point and go to a small angled fulcrum arm with a ball-and-socket joint, whence they climb a six-inch hardwood rod to the next fulcrum arm where a further ball-and-socket joint transmits the vibrations via a horizontal swivel section to yet one more ball-and-socket. This third ball-and-socket is connected directly to the diaphragm centre by a thin threaded rod.

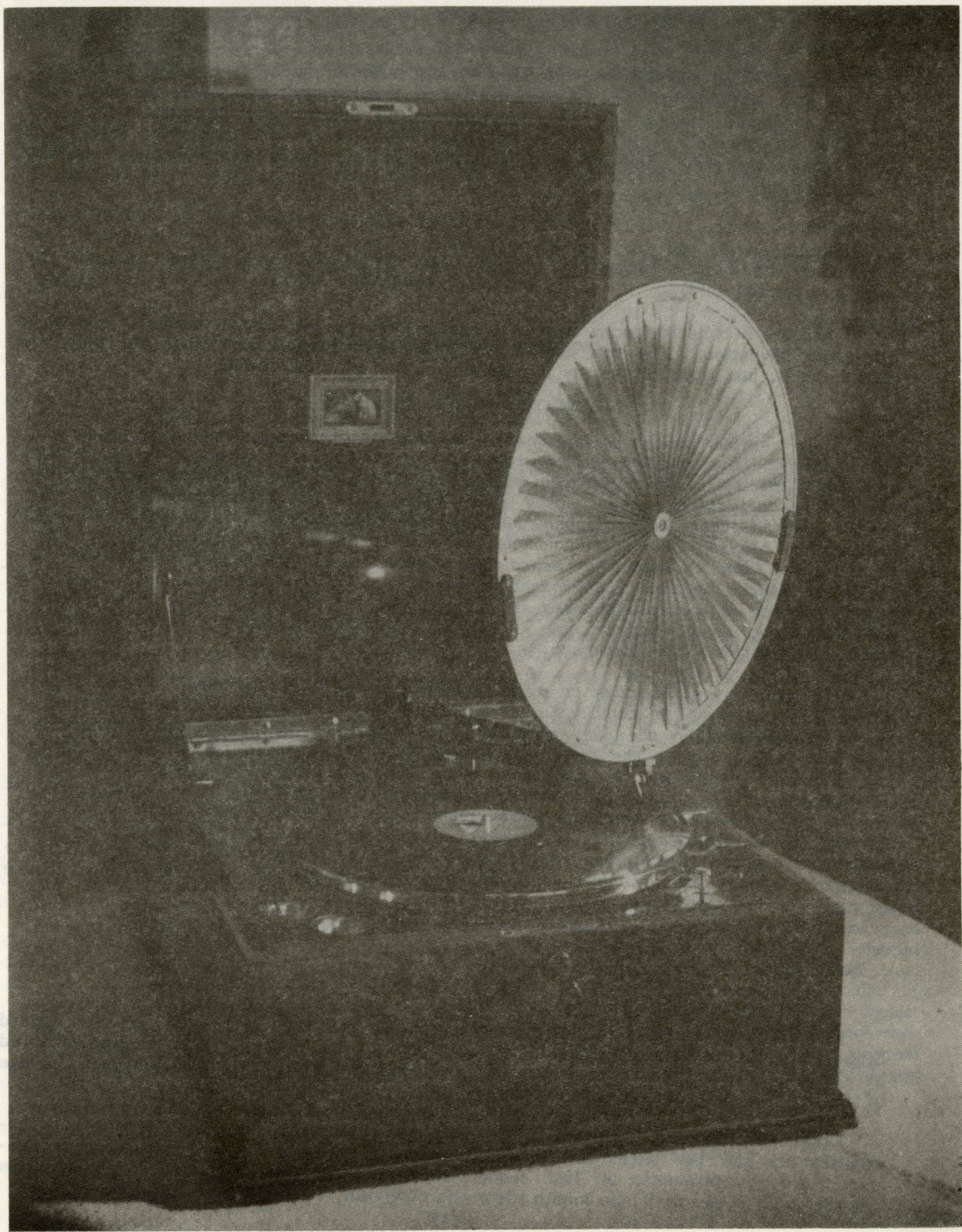
The wooden rod is obviously the best medium to transmit the vibrations because it has sufficient rigidity without excessive weight. The threaded rod passing through the core has an adjusting nut each side of the diaphragm, so that tension can be applied to the diaphragm if required for tuning purposes. The ball-and-socket joints must be a perfect fit if they are not to give off annoying buzzing sounds in loud passages, and I find that the diaphragm plays best if slightly tensioned away from the back support.

The whole diaphragm is held secure in a six-pronged frame (like the spokes of a wheel) and fitted in a wide-mouthed fork metal carrying arm, which would normally be the tone-arm. It is pivoted in the fork by two shouldered bolts and nuts, enabling the whole thing to be folded flat over the turntable when not in use. As the whole contraption weighs just over 1lb., there is a positive spring adjustment on the carrying arm to bring the playing weight back to the recognised 4 or 5 ozs.

The record wear of a Lumiere is greater than that of the conventional gramophone; not as many people think through the weight of the diaphragm assembly on the record, but by the extra leverage required of the needle to work the long connecting linkage to an extremely large diaphragm. Furthermore, the tracking is not very good. It is essential to use the best needles available and to change them every time.

The motor is a double 1½-inch spring job of good power with the normal HMV speedometer, which gives the user a chance to make sure the turntable is going at the right speed before lowering the diaphragm on to the record. It is a 12-inch turntable, with a semi-automatic brake.

It has been suggested that the diaphragm sounds better if an electric light is held near it. This would warm the paper and dry out any moisture, although you would experience no trouble in that respect if the machine were kept in a warm, dry environment. All in all, the pleated diaphragm is a clever invention. Lumiere applied for a patent for it in July 1908, and the patent (No. 11015) was granted in 1909. It was an invention which was the forerunner of the cone wireless speaker we know today. In fact it was used as an early wireless speaker by Sterling Telephone and Electric Company around 1925 under licence from the Gramophone Company, who owned the rights.



The case of the 460 is a work of art in itself, being of 'quarter-veneered' mahogany. Oak was also available and was £3 cheaper, at £22. I have not mentioned the 510 model which is a cabinet grand. This has a quadruple spring motor and is designed in the Queen Ann style with cabriole legs. It is an even more lush cabinet than the 460. The Pleated Diaphragm is the same, and all things mentioned in relation to the 460 apply equally to this cabinet model.

Examples of the H.M.V. Lumiere command good prices when they are sold at auction or privately, and if you are a prospective buyer it pays to examine the diaphragm carefully front and back - noting any blemishes on the pleats, or even patches stuck over holes and painted gold!

If you are a collector lucky enough to own a Lumiere, you can sit back and admire an interesting invention. You can admire the gold-plated fittings, and when you play your records on it, just think of the joy it must have given its first owner.

There were various prototype designs for a Pleated Diaphragm gramophone produced by the Gramophone Company between the time of the 1909 British Patent and the eventual appearance of the machine on the market in 1924, and two of these appeared when the E.M.I. collection was dispersed a few years ago. One incorporated a radio receiver, and the other, an early one, had the diaphragm mounted horizontally within the cabinet and playing the record underneath. The turntable had to be no larger than a record label, and to keep the record balanced on this there was a large wooden disc which was placed on top. A production model sold on the continent had, if my memory is correct, a turntable mounted at an angle and the diaphragm above it and lying parallel to it even when in use - the angled turntable made it possible to slip the record in below the diaphragm.

A further variation has come to my notice within the last few days, which is something of a mystery. It consists of the normal diaphragm mounted on a very different arm to that found on the 460 and 510; this arm is a sort of dog-leg affair with an extra link, so that the diaphragm, which sits at an angle to the record surface and faces the side of the machine rather than the front, travels in an almost straight line. The tracking must be as good as it is possible to be with a pivoted arm. The entire unit was apparently supplied in a simple wood packing case for fitting to existing machines; a small metal base plate is screwed to the motor board and the arm is attached to this with two large thumbscrews, which enable it to be removed easily for storage. I hope to have a photograph of this strange device in time for the next issue. - Ed.

SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Fifty years have passed since the death, on February 26th 1934, of Sir Edward Elgar, a great man who triumphed over many obstacles in his life to become accepted as the brilliant composer he was and also to be knighted before he reached the age of fifty.

Elgar was a great champion of the gramophone in those days when few of his contemporaries saw the potential in the recording medium. His recordings as a conductor are not uncommon on 78s. Indeed even Boult did not conduct any Elgarian pieces for the gramophone until one month after the composer's death.

Sir Edward's creativity as a composer virtually ceased after the first world war and he only completed four significant works between that time and his death. Among the four, however, is perhaps Elgar's most beautiful piece, the 'cello concerto.

Much of his music was, fortunately, recorded during the 78 era. Some readers may recall the particularly fine set of "Sea Pictures" (three plum labels) with the contralto Gladys Ripley. Another memorable set is the 1936 Boult recording of the "Enigma Variations", Sir Edward's most famous work. The fourteen variations surely rank with Holst's "The Planets" as the two most popular English concert works.

During his lifetime, Elgar often said that his highest ambition in life was to be a gentleman. I believe that his ambition was fulfilled.

J.E.Cavanagh

NEW USE FOR PHONOGRAPHS

Laurie Wilson recently found the following account of a World War One adaptation of the phonograph in "The Story of Broadcasting", published in 1924. The author was A.R.Burrows, at that time Assistant Controller of the B.B.C. As Laurie Wilson points out, it would be interesting to know what phonograph was used, and what was considered to be "high speed".

"The interception of enemy wireless propaganda rapidly became a very considerable business. Marconi operators, bound to secrecy, worked in shifts day and night throughout the entire four and a half years, the relieving operator taking up his duties before the man relieved ceased work, so that not a single dot or dash was missed. At first the work of intercepting the enemy messages was perfectly straightforward, as they were sent at hand speed, but as time wore on the Germans found their traffic getting out of hand. They then increased the power of their stations and introduced mechanical transmitters capable of sending at speeds greater than could be dealt with by ordinary means. It requires a very skilled wireless operator to be able to distinguish Morse signals being sent even at forty words a minute; so when the Nauen speed of transmission passed beyond forty words per minute it became necessary to use high speed phonograph records for interception purposes. Instead of ordinary headphones, special microphones with valve amplifiers were used. The signals received were made to operate a stylus which engraved them upon rapidly revolving wax cylinders. So soon as the cylinder was filled it was transferred to another phonograph running at slow speed. By this means the dots and dashes, which were originally unintelligible in the headphones owing to the rapid speed with which they followed one another, were made intelligible, and could be transcribed into ordinary script. The wax cylinders, having been checked, were shaved by a special machine, and used over again. It was no uncommon thing during one period of the war, before the Americans joined forces with the Allies, to intercept 12,000 words a day of press matter alone transmitted from Nauen to North and South America under the signature of well-known American correspondents in Europe. I feel sure that such of those reputable correspondents as have taken the trouble since the war to compare their original dispatches with those as actually radiated by the German wireless station have found discrepancies between the wireless version and their own handiwork."

One wonders what the Germans used for decoding? - Ed.

Although there have been no recent reports, the Yorkshire Branch has met on a monthly basis over the past year at members' homes as far apart as Leeds, Halifax, Sowerby Bridge, Cullingworth, Mirfield, Harrogate and York. Moreover, flaunting the odd rose or two, members even crossed the border and ventured to Liverpool to spend a pleasant time at Barry Williamson's home. Interest is more or less balanced within the Branch between the musical content of records and the machines themselves, where neither disc nor cylinder predominate. Meetings rarely have a fixed theme and usually centre on recent acquisitions or restoration projects, with plenty of chat and a good few records. During the year some members have organised displays of machines at various museums and steam rallies. One major event planned for next April is a phonographic week-end break at a guest house between Scarborough and Whitby. It will be open to all Society members and families and it is hoped this innovative idea will be well supported.

The Hereford Branch met at Richard Taylor's house on 15 November where members were able to inspect items in his collection. Richard's interests are at least twofold - collecting jazz 78s and restoring both disc and cylinder machines. Some superb examples of the latter activity were on display. Richard lives in a vintage house (what else?) and is nearing the end of a very extensive rebuilding/renovation activity. Bearing in mind all this non-essential work, it is remarkable that he finds time for the really important (phonographic) things of life!

Up in Cupar, the 56th meeting of the East Fife Branch concentrated entirely on Bulldog records from Douglas Lorimer's collection. It appears that these records were pressings made in the UK during and after WWI of recordings hitherto imported from Germany under the "BEKA" and "FAVOURITE" label before being banned at the outbreak of war. Though the Bulldog quality was superior to its antecedents, the recorded material was uninspiring and contained very few performances by well-known artists. After about 10 years Bulldog just faded away. Of the machines used to demonstrate the records, the Orchorsol "Gold Medalist" portable is worthy of mention. The machine was fitted with the original Orchorsol metal sound box which features an inexplicable array of springs, tabs and flanges which it was presumed enabled it to cope with bass modulations, as it is physically small. The 57th meeting, held at Chris Hamilton's home, featured the reproduction of recordings Jim Goodall made of Douglas FitzPatrick's super-sized "Ethereal Acoustical" gramophone at Sheringham Hall, Norfolk. This machine has a horn 24 feet long which flares to a rectangular opening 8 feet wide x 5 feet high and was designed and built by Douglas, apart from the horn which was put together by a Kelso firm of cabinet makers. It is powered by an electric motor and fitted with an EMG soundbox, whose diaphragm consists of the membrane from a doctor's stethoscope. This was Douglas's idea and it produces incredible results second to none (sic).

Meanwhile, down in the Chilterns 17 members were entertained at the home of Jim and Edith Balchin at Staines. There was a wide variety of mechanical music machines to see and hear, ranging from a Rockola juke box to a couple of barrel pianos. One of the latter was a Belgian cafe piano bought from an itinerant band of gypsies years ago. All visitors were delighted with the sound of Jim's latest toy - a book playing pipe organ recently made in Belgium. By popular acclaim the best tunes were "Beautiful Ohio" and "Lili Marlene". Of course, talking machines were not forgotten; Dave Roberts brought along his style No 14 Monarch and there was a Melba of 1905 complete on its pedestal on which a selection of records were played. As an unexpected bonus, Jim's neighbour showed members his partially completed full size steam riverboat which had been four years in the making.

HERITAGE IN BRASS

Frank Andrews reviews Volume 1 of a series of re-issues of British brass band recordings issued by Look Records Ltd. The number is LKLP7500, and the price is £5 (+ 90p postage) from Robert Wray, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is hoped that the record will shortly be available through the Society Booklist.

Sooner or later it was bound to occur to somebody that the brass band movement in Great Britain should make a survey of its recorded heritage and have some of its better performances transferred to long-playing discs for those interested in "banding" but not necessarily in record collecting. Now two gentlemen from the North-East have initiated a programme of re-issues with the express purpose of preserving the best of the bands, their performances and compositions as cut into wax by various companies over fifty years ago.

The first volume of the venture is devoted to some of the recorded efforts of the St. Hilda Colliery Band and Arthur Laycock, its solo cornettist, who was one of the finest players of his time (or any other, for that matter). There are six items to each side with a total playing time of forty-six minutes. The programme selected for each side has been well chosen and demonstrates the varied aspects of the brass band repertoire as performed by the thousands of amateur players who make up what was an uniquely British institution.

The first side offers the St. Hilda Marche, composed to celebrate the band's win in the National Championships in 1920 at the Crystal Palace. Theatre music from "The Beggar's Opera", Titania, a cornet solo, Allah, "pop" music from H. Nicholls and Batist's Andante in G follow. The side concludes with the test piece for 1920 Coriolanus by Cyril Jenkins.

The reverse begins with Bidgood's Rubinstein March, then Poet & Peasant, The Bostonian (another cornet solo), the popular tune "Pat in America" and the hymn tune "Simeon". The side concludes with another test piece, which the band played to come first in the 1912 Championships; music from Rossini's William Tell. The 1912 recording has not been used, however; instead, the 1926 electric re-recording was chosen, which for all its better sound quality is not as good a performance.

The transfers have been made from very good copies and no attempt has been made to "enhance" the sound; the well-loved (or disliked) "silent" surface noise is there to be heard but is in no way obtrusive.

The recordings date from 1920 to 1927, only two being electrical, and they were made by Zonophone, Aeolian, Edison Bell, Columbia and H.M.V. The playing generally is of a very high standard, as is only to be expected from a band which was at the top of its form during the period covered.

Recording dates have not been given as many are not obtainable, but issue dates are quoted. Inside the sleeve is a leaflet giving a comprehensive history of the St. Hilda Colliery Band (1896 - 1927; for the subsequent ten years it was known as the St. Hilda Professional Band) and biographies, with photographs, of its personnel.

For those interested in good brass band recordings I recommend this first effort. Vol. 2 is to be devoted to the work of the cornet and trumpet soloist Jack Mackintosh.

THE DIVA AND THE CLOWN

The programme at the November meeting was given by Peter Martland, the title referring to the interesting juxtaposition of Dame Nellie Melba and Sir Harry Lauder as joint subjects for discussion. As Peter's fluent and well-prepared talk is likely to be of interest to a wider circle of members than were present, we are publishing an edited version of his own text.

Although Melba and Lauder represented totally different strands of the entertainment profession, there are many strikingly similar threads in their lives and work:

Both achieved unprecedented success in their respective fields, world-wide.

Both maintained their success for more than 35 years - and beyond their peak.

Both emerged from an essentially 19th-century tradition and lived to see its decline.

Both had an uncanny knowledge of what their audiences required and gave it to them.

Both were utterly ruthless professionals, good in business and consummate artists.

Both shared a Scottish Presbyterian inheritance and its deep but not spiritual impact.

Both struggled against enormous odds to reach the top of their professions.

Both would be regarded today as utter snobs, who demanded and got social prestige.

Both were rewarded with titular honours at the same time, though not for services to their art.

Their drive to succeed and to remain at the top made for both many artistic enemies.

Since their departure, both have been largely rejected and forgotten.

We are fortunate because the emergence of the talking machine as a musical instrument and as a means of providing top rank artists with rich pickings coincided with Melba's and Lauder's peak years. Both profited greatly by their association with the talking machine and both recorded liberally over many years. Melba made over 220 records for the Gramophone Company and Victor, while Lauder made over 400 for the Gramophone Company and Victor and also for Pathe, Edison and Edison Bell.

Thus in assessing Melba we have a key asset: her records. They span the second half of her career, and represent fairly the range and repertoire she used. With about 220 to choose from, they offer something to fill in the gaps left in the story by the shortcomings of personal reminiscences and the difficulty of equating contemporary accounts to present-day taste. Not that the recordings are without their problems. Melba's voice did not record well under the acoustic system: but we do have a small number of electric recordings made in 1926, when Melba was in her mid-60s.

John Freestone suggested to a young collector that to get on with Melba's recordings he first listen to one of the electrics, "Dite all Giovine". The circumstances of this recording should not go unnoted. Melba recorded six sides on December 17th 1926 - almost six months after her "Farewell". They were her final recordings. Two sides were with her Australian protegee John Brownlee. It is clear that the wily artist even exploits the weakness of old age to help get her effects. It is a great interpretation. Her partner, conscious of the power of his voice, stays back from the microphone during the record to enable the aging diva to shine.

Helen Porter Mitchell was born on May 19th 1861 (or 1859), in Richmond near Melbourne, Australia. Her father, David Mitchell, a Scottish immigrant, was a builder who made a fortune in the region around Melbourne and was able to bring Nellie and her six sisters up comfortably. Her father's strict Presbyterian background was a great influence on the singer and her tenacity and legendary bloody-mindedness can be traced to these beginnings.

She married at 21 to a ne'er-do-well Irish baronet Charles Armstrong, and had one child, George. The marriage failed. Melba's natural singing voice and her father's wealth enabled her to study in Melbourne with an Italian teacher, Cecchi. In 1886 she came to London with her father with the ambition of becoming an opera singer. She failed. She went to Paris to study under Marchesi. This wily old teacher recognised the natural beauty and potential of Melba's voice and under her tuition she attained a perfect scale and the delicious 'shake', the foundation of Melba. The 1905 recording of the "Jewel Song" from Faust with its excellent trill shows how delicious Melba could be.

Melba's first operatic success was in Brussels on October 13th 1887, in the role of Gilda in Rigoletto: the result was a triumph. It was at this point that she adopted the name Melba. At her first Covent Garden appearance, in May 1888, in Lucia, she failed to make the impact that she had in Brussels. A season in Paris and Brussels and the support of the socialite power behind Covent Garden ensured that when Melba sang Juliette with Jean de Reszke in June 1889 she had found her artistic home.

From 1889 to 1914, with only two absences, Melba dominated Covent Garden. Her singing improved with the partnership of Jean de Reszke, she polished her style and grasped every opportunity - socially and musically. "One Royal performance at Windsor was worth 200 performances at Covent Garden", she wrote. Melba was indeed a snob with royal stars in her eyes. Opera singers at the beginning of their careers frequently became the mistresses of nobles, rich patrons or impresarios. Melba was by 1891 the mistress of Louis Philippe Duc d'Orleans. She accepted that she could never marry him, and never mentions him in her autobiography.

In the 1890's Melba established her limited but fashionable repertoire: Romeo and Juliet, the works of Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Pucini, with one disastrous foray into Wagner. In 1899 she persuaded the Covent Garden management to produce La Boheme with herself as Mimi. They agreed on the condition that between Acts 1 and 2 she came out to sing the Mad Scene from Lucia. This she did, but she also created for Boheme a central role in the Covent Garden repertoire.

Her recording career started in 1904, and the success of her early records helped to introduce the Gramophone to polite society. She had been assiduously pursued by the Gramophone Company, and was to make over 200 records for them and Victor. There is no doubt that the early records tended to blast on contemporary equipment, and Victor tried to avoid this, making the voice sound rather wooden and restricted in the process.

In her relations with other artists Melba was professional and ruthless. She wrote "In my own path, great obstacles were placed, but I do not think anything in the world could have hindered me from becoming a singer." Yet many singers hated her and believed that she prevented them from singing at Covent Garden. Her relations with the young John McCormack were tempestuous. He had toured Australia with her in 1909 and recorded with her on May 11th 1910. The row which preceded the recording of the Rigoletto Quartet is now part of gramophone folklore. Suffice it to say that Melba was pushed

to the back and Edna Thornton, playing the bit part of the barmaid steals the show.

The Great War effectively ended Melba's great career. She toured the world raising money for the Red Cross and other charities, and was awarded her D.B.E. for her war work, not for services to her art. However, she carried on at Covent Garden after the war and toured Australia successfully in 1924. The famous Farewell Performance in 1926 was attended by the King and Queen, and Melba sang pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Boheme. For record collectors, that night in June 1926 is more than a written memory, for extracts were recorded live by land-line to Gloucester House. In the 78 rpm period only three sides were issued and they were of indifferent quality because of the difficulties of blind recording. Yet they do provide a glimpse of Melba on stage and for that reason they are of immense value.

Retirement came badly to Melba: she gave concerts in England and Australia, but life ceased to have a purpose for her. She returned sick and dying to Australia and died in Sydney on February 23rd 1931.

As a singer, Melba looked backwards to the 19th century; her manner, style and repertoire reflected a musical fashion quite alien to us. Yet she knew what she could do, knew what her public wanted and gave it to them. Today she still retains an aura of greatness; writers compare her to Callas and Sutherland, and in Australia she is regarded as something of a folk-hero, a local girl who made good and showed Europe and America what Australians could do.

Hary Lauder was born in Scotland, at Portobello, on August 4th 1870. He was one of a large family, whose poverty was at times extreme and whose influence on Harry was great. There was little by way of education, and at the age of nine he started on a life of wage slavery. He worked firstly in the local flax mill, then for ten years in the Lanarkshire coal fields. His great natural talent first emerged when, as a young man, he won a talent competition. This spurred him on and he slowly began to acquire first local and then semi-professional engagements as a comic. He readily confessed that he stole jokes and whole acts liberally from other comics. In the early 1890s (by which time he was married, with a baby son) he decided to quit mining and to make the music hall his full-time profession.

Once he had achieved fame on the Scottish music hall circuit, he saw that the real money and real fame came south of the Border - the graveyard of Scottish comedians. However, Lauder carefully constructed a new act and a new persona for his new audience. He wrote later that he decided that he would be a Scottish comedian speaking English with a Scottish accent, but without a dialect. The persona he created was the caricature music hall Scot. He devised an outlandish Highland dress with an oversize bonnet and feather and a crooked walking stick. This was a savage mockery of the tradition of Walter Scott and the romance of the Highlands. His pretence at mean-ness and penny-pinching was drawn from his childhood experience and the dourness of his Presbyterian inheritance.

Lauder first recorded quite early in his career, in February 1902. He was by this time the highest paid music hall artist in London. His ability to transfer elements of his music hall performance on to records is quite revealing. The power to draw his audience is still present on the records. Simply, Lauder did not need the trappings of his talent to keep the audience's attention.

Lauder was also a writer and composer of many of his own songs. He built up a strong repertoire, drawing on similar threads: a strong sentimental element centred around a mother, home or a girl; the use of familiar domestic scenes (Breakfast in Bed) or a

pastoral imagery as in 'Roamin' in the Gloamin'. Like Melba, he knew exactly what his audiences wanted and gave it to them. By 1910, his repertoire was largely complete, and many subsequent recordings were re-recordings of old favourites.

In the years before 1914, Lauder made two departures from the traditional music hall artist's role. He toured extensively the English-speaking world, and established his reputation in the United States, where he found a ready-made audience of ex-patriots anxious to drink in the sentiment of the land they had left behind. Lauder also moved upwards socially. Music hall with its working-class patrons was not much frequented by the middle and upper classes, but through his work in pantomime and concerts Lauder penetrated the world of kings and presidents. He was also intensely patriotic and when war came, did much to aid recruitment and threw himself into war-work and propaganda. He toured the States in 1915, met President Wilson, and ensured that Americans knew what he believed Britain was fighting for. His patriotism was tested when, on December 29th 1916, his only son John was killed in action. At the time, Lauder was appearing in "Three Cheers" at the Shaftesbury Theatre. Stunned and broken, he withdrew for three days.

His initial response to this personal crisis was to try to volunteer himself. Failing that, he overcame much opposition and took a concert tour to troops on the Western Front. Not as other artists had done, to rest camps in the rear, but up to the front line itself. For Lauder it was a therapy, for his audience it was a breath of humanity. Lauder was knighted for his services to the war effort in 1919.

As his recording career advanced, it became the practice to make two recordings of the same piece: a ten-inch version for the Zonophone label and a twelve-inch one for the black label and later red label. Before 1920, he was described on record labels as a "Scottish Comedian", but over the years he had outgrown that epithet. He had become an all-round entertainer - a super-star. Some of the later black label records describe him as a baritone.

His post-war career was deeply scarred by his wartime experiences, and to a degree this is reflected in a number of maudlin, naive pieces he recorded. They suggest a yearning for the past which is difficult to match with the upbeat Lauder of pre-war years.

Lauder's special link with the soldiers of the war continued after the armistice. He raised one million pounds for disabled Scottish servicemen. During the 1920s he composed the song for which he is best remembered - 'The End of the Road'. It is a song of stoicism, patriotism and reflection.

Assessing Sir Harry Lauder is not easy. He is capable of raising emotions of anger and contempt in Scotland today. In the inter-war years the idealised picture he drew of working life, although a comfort to his aristocratic and industrialist friends, was wearing a little thin. However, he retained in the ex-soldiers a faithful audience.

During World War Two, a young comic on the same bill as Harry Lauder (out of retirement to entertain the troops) was appalled at the prospect of the old man going on stage to face an audience that had just given him the bird. He was soon astounded to see within a couple of minutes that the old man had his audience in the palm of his hand. His act ended with the audience singing his old songs with him and calling for more. To the end, Harry Lauder was the consummate artist who gave his audiences what they wanted.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SECRETARY

I do not know whether members are trying to catch the public attention but while listening to the radio during the last month I have heard at least two members' names mentioned. Early in January, on the John Dunne show on Radio 2, a member from the Hereford area was trying to identify a mystery voice. He spoke at some length to John Dunne about his collection of machines and about his 12,000 records. Fortunately, values were not mentioned - this always brings a spate of enquiries from people who think they have a fortune in the attic (a single-sided Caruso record worth at least 50p). The Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd. were mentioned, and their successors through to EMI. An interesting bit of chat. It was a pity you failed to identify the voice and win record tokens to increase your collection, John Windsor.

A few days later a news report on LBC mentioned Philip Knighton, who is alleged to have evidence that his chickens lay eggs more cheerfully while listening to old wireless sets playing music.

While on the subject of LBC you should tune in on Thursday evenings at 9.30 p.m. to hear Sandy Forbes taking a walk down 'Nostalgia Street' for about 30 minutes. He plays a good variety of stuff from the 1920s and 30s. Capital Radio on Sunday nights from 11 till midnight offers vintage jazz and the like from Brian Rust. Both these stations can be heard within 50 miles of London. On BBC2 there is Allan Dell on Monday from 8 p.m. to 8.30 on the Dance Band Days, and on Wednesdays you can hear Hubert Gregg on 'Thanks for the Memory' from 10.30 to 11 p.m.

Some of our members also get involved in compiling recordings to put on long playing records. Two such records currently available from the Booklist are 'Cylinder Jazz' and 'I'll dance till de Sun Breaks Thru.' Cylinder Jazz is a compilation of Blue Amberol records featuring jazz and ragtime music originally recorded between 1913 and 1927. The sleeve notes are very comprehensive with the fullest available information on the artists performing on each cylinder with biographies where appropriate. The cylinders have been well transferred but one does occasionally hear a cylinder with a thump caused by a flat patch.

The second of the two records mentioned is a compilation of cakewalks, rags and stomps on disc, some being Berliners from 1898; most are from various pre-1917 labels, and there is one from an Edison Disc of 1923. When one considers the primitive recordings used in this album it is surprising that we can get such good reproduction on the finished product. Again the sleeve notes are very full; in both cases, they were compiled by Brian Rust, who is an authority on jazz records. Roy Mickleburgh, a long-standing member of the Society, provided much of the material for transfer.

The Peter Dawson Appreciation Society has recently been formed to unite the many collectors of Dawson's work. Several people world-wide are compiling discographies and such a society will be a good contact point to prevent duplication of effort. An s.a.e. will bring more information of you write to :

[REDACTED]

RECORDING BY PHOTOGRAPHY

We've all heard of Charles Cros and his idea (idea only) of recording sound by setting up vibrations in a membrane, recording them through a stylus on to a disc covered with lampblack and photo-engraving the trace into relief or indentations to allow playback. All this in 1877, while Edison actually made a machine that worked.

Well, how about the following description of recording sound photographically on disc (no scratchy stylus or messy mechanical indentation) - and this way back in 1883:

"Mr. St George has devised a means of recording a telephone conversation by the aid of photography. A circular plate of glass is coated with collodion and made sensitive as a photographic plate. It is placed in a dark chamber having a small slit, through which a pencil of light can fall upon the sensitive surface of the glass. The vibrating telephone plate actuates a shutter that varies the thickness of the luminous pencil corresponding to the vibrations after a plan introduced by Professor Graham Bell. The pencil falling on the photographic plate prints a dark line on it whose thickness is proportional to the vibrations of the telephone plate. The plate is revolved by clockwork like the barrel of a phonograph, and the record is afterward chemically fixed."

This appeared in the November 1883 issue of the Scientific American. It sounds like a variable area photographic recording process - anyway, these discs could be played back with modern equipment. But were any ever made, or was this just another idea?

On another subject, I am much obliged to Frank Andrews for his comments on my article on dating Columbia records in Hillandale 134. I am sure he is right on the early history of Columbia in England, on which I am no expert.

Yes, I was aware of the 14-inch discs which existed along with the early 7-inch and 10-inch records, but as I understand it, there were not many of these issued - and they can't have been very good value for money if they only had what the 7-inch discs had. Frank is quite right that, with regard to the 75000 series, 1907 is a misprint for 1917. (The date for the series in the table is correctly reproduced as 'late 1916?').

I am glad that research by knowledgeable people on the history of the Columbia matrix series is well advanced, and I hope that (a) it is published and (b) it will be published in accessible sources.

Frank asks me for an example of any disc "issued at various times with several catalogue numbers and many of these look like catalogue numbers" (the second 'catalogue' is a misprint for 'matrix'). He must be having me on - what about the following? - Charles Hackett, Col. USA, matrix 49616-2, issued as 49616, 71002D, 8929M, D17555 (recorded April 4 1919), or Lillian Nordica, Col USA, Matrix 30133-2, issued as 30133 and in the 30s as 74021 (recorded 1907).

G.W.Taylor.

Hear, Hear! say I to the penultimate paragraph of George Taylor's letter. If these people have been beavering away on the subject, let them produce the fruits of their labours. A few well-written articles of the sort George Taylor sends in would make the Editor's job that much easier. - Ed.

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